

'I support recognition for First Nations peoples.

First Nations peoples have called for recognition under the Constitution.

'We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people', 'We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.'

'We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country.'

I take issue with the wording of the referendum defining 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' Voice. I consider this wording may be divisive. I prefer 'First Nations peoples' recognising the longest continuous living culture in the world.

Australians should take pride in this heritage and honour and respect it.

First Nations peoples seek empowerment as a collective body and the Voice attempts to do this by insertion of the clause in the referendum.

The problem as I see it is the notion of 'The Voice'.

The principal is explained here: <https://voice.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-03/design-principles-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-voice.pdf>

It is dependent on voters acquainting themselves with the role and function of 'The Voice'.

In that respect it appears 'The Voice' is powerless to effect change or implement benefits for First Nations peoples.

Because of the diversity of First Nations peoples how timely will it be to have consensus to make recommendations on behalf of all First Nations peoples?

The notion of representation is the critical purpose but can this be achieved through this referendum?

To me 'The Voice' or 'Voice' lacks tangible credibility.

First Nations peoples need firstly to empower themselves. It is a requirement or the Voice will not be effective, 'Members of the Voice would be selected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, not appointed by the Executive Government'. There is a pre-requirement for representatives to be empowered or they cannot make recommendations as 'The Voice'.

How will this 'empowerment' or election to be a Voice be effected? Through local elections? At what cost and will there be funding available for this?

There appears to have been some consensus amongst First Nations peoples with the release of The Uluru Statement but will this referendum provide any tangible implementation of representation?

I fear that unless First Nation peoples empower themselves without being reliant on supposed empowerment through all the regulations required to give effect to The Voice it may just be more bureaucracy impeding progress for First Nations peoples.

I fear if this referendum does succeed it will fail through the bureaucracy required to give any representation to 'The Voice' and in any case in the explanatory words there is no obligation on the government to take any action only to seek representation through The Voice.

In fact this wording suggests it may actually serve to disempower First Nations peoples with no right of veto: 'The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, including its composition, functions, powers and procedures.' This in effect may cede power over the Voice to the Parliament.

I believe that as First Nations peoples have never ceded ownership of this land they should empower themselves by negotiating a treaty and from a position of empowerment then negotiate recognition through the Constitution if that is necessary. A treaty could itself define the outcomes for First Nations peoples.

I am not a First Nations person but I make my comments with the interests of First Nations peoples at heart and as a devils advocate for the proposed wording of this referendum.

It is still my intention to vote Yes without there being at this stage any other vehicle such as a treaty to gain recognition.

Regards

Bill Purvis